

What is claimed is:

1. A method for provisioning services offered by a service provider for a plurality of parties, comprising:
 - 5 providing an interface by which a first party identifies attributes of a particular service to be shared with a second party and to be provisioned by the service provider;
 - offering participation in the particular service to the second party via an interface by which the second party may signal acceptance of the particular service; and
 - 10 if acceptance by the second party of the particular service is signaled, then executing a process to provision the particular service for the first party and the second party.
2. The method of claim 1, including:
 - establishing a connection between the service provider and the first party for delivery of services according to parameters of a service provider account with the first party; and
 - 15 establishing a connection between the service provider and the second party for delivery of services according to parameters of a service provider account with the second party.
3. The method of claim 2, including verifying that the service provider accounts of the first party and of the second party support the particular service.
- 20 4. The method of claim 1, wherein the services comprise communication services, and the attributes of the particular service include parameters of a communication channel using communication resources of the service provider.
- 25 5. The method of claim 1, wherein said providing an interface includes displaying an image prompting a user to create a logical instance of the particular service on behalf of the first party.
- 30 6. The method of claim 5, wherein said offering includes displaying an image prompting a user to create a logical connection to the logical instance of the particular service to signal acceptance on behalf of the second party.

7. The method of claim 5 , including upon creation of the logical instance of the particular service, displaying an image prompting a user to offer the particular service to another party, on behalf of the first party.
- 5 8. The method of claim 1, including sending the attributes of the particular service to the service provider for use in provisioning the particular service for the first and second parties.
9. The method of claim 1, wherein the particular service is arranged for at least one additional party in addition to the first and second parties, including:
- 10 offering participation in the particular service to the at least one additional party via an interface by which the at least one additional party may signal acceptance the particular service; and
- 15 if acceptance by the at least one additional party of the particular service is signaled, then executing a process to provision the particular service for the at least one additional party.
10. The method of claim 1, wherein said providing an interface includes establishing a server, available to the first party via a public network, to manage the interface.
- 20 11. The method of claim 10 wherein the server comprises an internet server available to the first party using an internet browser.

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12. The method of claim 1, wherein said interface comprise an electronic document.

13. The method of claim 12, wherein the electronic document includes objects compliant with a hypertext markup language HTML standard.

14. The method of claim 13, wherein the HTML standard is XML.

15. The method of claim 1, wherein the services comprise electric power delivery.

16. The method of claim 1, wherein the services comprise fuel delivery.

17. The method of claim 1, including providing said interface using a secure internet protocol.

18. The method of claim 1, wherein the services comprise water delivery.

19. The method of claim 1, wherein the services comprise secure communication bandwidth delivery.

20. The method of claim 1, including providing information via said interface by which said second party may signal acceptance, the information being associated with said offering from the first party for use by said second party independent of the service provider.

21. A method for provisioning services offered by a service provider for a plurality of parties, comprising:

establishing connections between the service provider and a plurality of parties for delivery of services according to parameters of respective service provider accounts;

providing an interface by which a first party in the plurality of parties identifies attributes of a particular service to be shared with one or more other parties in the plurality of parties, and to be provisioned by the service provider;

verifying that the service provider accounts of the first party and of said one or more other parties support the particular service;

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offering participation in the particular service to said one or more other parties having service provider accounts which support the particular service via an interface by which said one or more other parties may individually signal acceptance the particular service; and

if acceptance of the particular service is signaled, then executing a process to provision the particular service for the first party and said one or more other parties which signaled acceptance.

22. The method of claim 21, wherein the services comprise communication services, and the attributes of the particular service include parameters of a communication channel using communication resources of the service provider.

23. The method of claim 21, wherein said providing an interface includes displaying an image prompting a user to create a logical instance of the particular service on behalf of the first party.

24. The method of claim 23, wherein said offering includes displaying an image prompting a user to create a logical connection to the logical instance of the particular service to signal acceptance on behalf of the second party.

25. The method of claim 23, including upon creation of the logical instance of the particular service, displaying an image prompting a user to offer participation in the particular service to another party, on behalf of the first party.

26. The method of claim 23, wherein said interface includes constructs by which said one or more other parties may indicate a location for connection to the particular service.

27. The method of claim 21, including sending the attributes of the particular service to the service provider for use in provisioning the particular service for the first and second parties.

28. The method of claim 21, wherein said providing an interface includes establishing a server, available to the first party via a public network, to manage the interface.

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29. The method of claim 28, wherein the server comprises an internet server available to the first party using an internet browser.

30. The method of claim 21, wherein said interface comprise an electronic document.

31. The method of claim 30, wherein the electronic document includes objects compliant with a hypertext markup language HTML standard.

33. The method of claim 30, wherein the HTML standard is XML.

33. The method of claim 21, wherein the services comprise electric power delivery.

34. The method of claim 21, wherein the services comprise fuel delivery.

35. The method of claim 21, wherein the services comprise water delivery.

36. The method of claim 21, wherein the services comprise secure communication bandwidth delivery.

37. The method of claim 21, including providing information via said interface by which said one or more other parties may signal acceptance, the information being associated with said offering from the first party for use by said one or more other parties independent of the service provider.

38. A method for provisioning communication services in a communication network offered by a service provider for a plurality of parties, comprising:

establishing connections of a plurality of parties to the communication network for communication services, said connections comprising respective service interfaces and parameters of respective service provider accounts;

providing an user interface by which a first party in the plurality of parties identifies attributes of a particular communication channel in the communication network to be shared with

verifying that the service provider accounts of the first party and of said one or more other parties support the particular communication channel;

if acceptance of the particular communication channel is signaled, then executing a process to provision the particular communication channel for the first party and said one or more other parties which signaled acceptance.

40. The method of claim 38, wherein the attributes of the particular communication channel include identifiers of service interfaces for the parties, and data indicating that the channel is to be one of a set including point-to-point, point-to-multipoint, or multipoint-to-multipoint.

42. The method of claim 39, wherein the unique network addresses comprise MAC addresses, and the tag comprises a VLAN tag.

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44. The method of claim 43, wherein said respective service interfaces have MAC addresses, and said process to provision the particular interface includes establishing a VLAN tag to identify packets for use of the particular communication channel, configuring the service interfaces to tag packets for use of the particular communication channel, and configuring switches in the network to route packets to and from the service interfaces in response to the MAC addresses and the VLAN tag in the packets.

45. The method of claim 38, wherein said providing an interface includes displaying an image prompting a user to create a logical instance of the particular service on behalf of the first party.

46. The method of claim 40, wherein said offering includes displaying an image prompting a user to create a logical connection to the logical instance of the particular communication channel to signal acceptance on behalf of the second party.

47. The method of claim 46, including upon creation of the logical instance of the particular communication channel, displaying an image prompting a user to offer participation in the particular communication channel to another party, on behalf of the first party.

48. The method of claim 38, including sending the attributes of the particular communication channel to the service provider for use in provisioning the particular communication channel for the first and second parties.

49. The method of claim 38, wherein said providing an interface includes establishing a server, available to the first party via a public network, to manage the interface.

50. The method of claim 49, wherein the server comprises an internet server available to the first party using an internet browser.

51. The method of claim 38, wherein said interface comprise an electronic document.

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52. The method of claim 51, wherein the electronic document includes objects compliant with a hypertext markup language HTML standard.

53. The method of claim 52, wherein the HTML standard is XML.

54. The method of claim 38, including providing information via said interface by which said one or more other parties may signal acceptance, the information being associated with said offering from the first party for use by said one or more other parties independent of the service provider.

55. A method for provisioning services offered by a service provider for a plurality of parties, comprising:

establishing connections and service provider accounts between the service provider and a plurality of parties for delivery of services among the parties according to parameters of respective service provider accounts;

providing an interface accessible by parties in the plurality of parties, the interface supporting logical definition of a services to be provisioned by the service provider and associated with parties in the plurality of parties, supporting logical connection to particular logically defined services by said associated parties, and supporting offers of particular logically defined services by a first party to one or more other of said associated parties, and;

processing the logical definitions of particular services to verify that the service provider accounts of said associated parties support the particular logically defined service; and

after logical connections of one or more parties to said particular logically defined service, executing a process to provision an instance of the particular logically defined service for said associated parties.

56. The method of claim 55, wherein the services offer comprise bandwidth in a communication network, and the connections comprise service interfaces coupled to the communication network.

57. The method of claim 56, wherein said communication network comprises a plurality of network intermediate devices which include filters for use in routing data flow among service interfaces, and said process to provision includes configuring said filters according to the particular logically defined service.

58. The method of claim 57, wherein said service interfaces have MAC addresses, and said filters are responsive to said MAC addresses.

59. The method of claim 58, wherein said process to provision includes assigning Virtual LAN tags to particularly logically defined services, and configuring said service interfaces to append the assigned virtual LAN tags to data packets transmitted via the service interface to the communication network.

60. The method of claim 55, wherein particular logically defined service be one of a set including a point-to-point channel, a point-to-multipoint channel, or multipoint-to-multipoint channel.

61. A method of provisioning services offered by a service provider for a plurality of parties comprising:

providing a representation accessible by the plurality of parties via a communication network, of potential and actual uses of the services to allow a party in the plurality of parties to conduct transactions using or involving the service with other parties in the plurality of parties.

62. The method of claim 61, wherein said representation comprises an up to date representation of the service including a record of pending actions updated as they are created.

63. The method of claim 61, wherein the representation comprises elements, when displayed to one of the parties in the plurality of parties, convey sufficient information so as to explain a proposed transaction.

64. The method of claim 61, wherein the representation includes images and forms expressed in a markup language compatible with a standard HTML or XML.

65. The method of claim 61, including providing security for the representation and the communication network to the plurality of parties known by the plurality of parties to be sufficient to trust data and origin/authorship of a proposed transaction.

66. The method of claim 65, wherein providing security includes conducting the transactions using certificates and secure network technology.

67. A method of provisioning services offered by a service provider, comprising:
providing an interactive model of a relationship involving participation in the service offered by the service provider, and containing a plurality of elements represented by one or more of images and forms corresponding to parameters of the participation in the service; and
allowing selective changes in parameters of the participation in the service by one or more of manipulating images and recording an object in a form, said selective changes including representing a participant's agreement to one or more of engage or participate in the relationship, and change the parameters of participation in the service for the relationship.

68. The method of claim 67, including electronically conveying changes from one party to another party to convey requests for changes in parameters of the participation in the service.

69. A system that graphically represents a connection or service relationship as a wire with two ends or plugs that can be connected into or moved between sockets or interfaces independently by two participants in a proposed transaction to facilitate their independent control over the delivery and acceptance of a service.